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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0437
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6074
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3393
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7243
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4509
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1774
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1809
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 1770
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 3990
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4409
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 8978
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR WHA/AND LPETRONI
COMMERCE FOR JANGLIN
TREASURY FOR SGOOCH

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TAGS: [EINV](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: BUSINESS AS USUAL, DESPITE RISING TENSIONS

REF: LA PAZ 2393

¶1. (SBU) Summary: La Paz businessmen reacted with relative calm to the September 1 violence in the constituent assembly (reftel), declaring that business would continue as usual. While not necessarily thriving, businesses appear to have survived the uncertainty of the last few months, and most expect to withstand rising tensions. What businessmen want, they say, is to be left alone - free of economic and political uncertainty and the disruptions of the "media luna" strike called for September 8 (reftel). End summary.

¶2. (SBU) La Paz businessmen reacted with relative calm to the September 1 violence in the constituent assembly (reftel), declaring that business would continue as usual. George Satt, President of United Furniture Industries, a leading wood products exporter, told Econoff September 5 that he viewed the events with much embarrassment but little surprise; the exchange of blows and the throwing of water bottles might make Bolivians appear incapable of maintaining order, he said, but would not directly affect existing operations.

¶3. (SBU) While not necessarily thriving, businesses appear to have survived the uncertainty of the last few months, and most expect to withstand rising tensions. The general sense among businessmen, Satt commented, was that companies would survive as well as they could, even while delaying new investments. Satt's impression was that most businesses were taking recent events in stride, with few firms seriously considering drastic changes to operations.

¶4. (SBU) Confederation of Private Businessmen President Roberto Mustafa echoed Satt's statements, noting that businessmen want mostly to be left alone - free of economic and political uncertainty and the disruptions of the "media luna" strike called for September 8 (reftel). Strikes of any sort, but particularly on such a scale, upset operations and cost businessmen dearly, he pointed out, arguing that the business community would be better served if the government and the opposition compromised, averted large-scale work

stoppages, and brought the constituent assembly to a successful conclusion.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Despite escalating rhetoric and rising east-west tensions, it appears business is continuing as usual. Being the practical sort, and with years of experience in a country in which ambiguity is the norm, most businessmen have taken recent events in stride. They may wish for clarity, but they recognize that the chances of getting it are slim. End comment.
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